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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 AID-20 DRC-01 /122 W
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R 221310Z AUG 74
FM AMEMBASSY VALLETTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5739
INFO AMEMBASSY ROME
USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L VALLETTA 1379

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PORG, MT, VT, EEC
SUBJ: MINTOFF VISIT TO ROME

REF: VALLETTA 1308 (NOTAL); ROME 11405

1. PRIME MINISTER MINTOFF'S TWO AND-A-HALF-DAY TRIP TO ROME AUGUST 19-21 RESULTED IN THE FOLLOWING OFFICIAL PRESS RELEASE BEING ISSUED BY THE GOM UPON HIS RETURN:

QUOTE THE MALTA GOVERNMENT DELEGATION WHICH WENT TO ROME ON MONDAY HAS MET REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ITALIAN GIVERNMENT AND DISCUSSED MALTA'S NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE COMMON MARKET, AND OTHER BILATERAL ISSUES.

THE MALTESE DELEGATION ALSO FOUND TIME TO INFORM THE VATICAN AUTHORITIES OF CHANGES ENVISAGED IN THE CONSTITUTION AND IN CONSTITUTIONAL LAWS WHICH REGARD RELIGION.

AFTER SOME DISCUSSIONS AND STUDIES, THE MALTESE DELEGATION WAS INFORMED THAT FROM THE VATICAN THERE WERE NO OBJECTIONS.

END QUOTE
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2. MINTOFF'S TRIP ORIGINALLY WAS EXPECTED TO INCLUDE ONE DAY IN ROME AND ONE DAY IN LONDON. HOWEVER, AFTER A SERIES OF QUIET MEETINGS WITH ITALIAN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND BUSINESS-MEN ON AUGUST 19, A TELEGRAPHIC REQUEST WAS SENT AUGUST 20 TO ARCHBISHOP GONZI TO JOIN MINTOFF AND HIS DELEGATION FOR DISCUSSIONS AT THE VATACAN. CONSIDERABLE PUBLICITY WAS GIVEN IN MALTA TO THE "HASTY PREPARATIONS" AND THE "MYSTERY" SURROUND-ING THE ARCHBISHOP'S TRIP TO ROME.

3. NOW THAT THE GENERAL NATURE OF THE GOM-VATICAN DISCUSSIONS HAS BEEN MADE PUBLIC, THE MALTESE PRESS IS EMPHASIZING THE LON-DISCUSSED CHANGES IN THE MALTESE CONSTITUTION AS THE MAIN FOCUS OF MINTOFF'S ROME VISIT. FOR EXAMPLE, THE GWU NEWSPAPERS, MALTA NEWS, HEADLINES THE RESULTS AS "VATICAN APPROVAL (OF) CHANGES IN THE CONSTITUTION."

4. COMMENT: IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THE VATICAN DISCUSSIONS WERE AN AFTERTHOUGHT DESIGNED TO PROVIDE MINTOFF WITH MORE SPETACULAR RESULTS FROM HIS TRIP THAN WOULD OTHERWISE HAVE BEEN THE CASE. VATICAN ACCEPTANCE OF PROPOSED CHANGES IN MALTA'S CONSTITUTION WILL, OF COURSE, BE OF CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL HELP TO MINTOFF, BUT HE STILL MUST OBTAIN PARLIAMENTARY APPROVAL BY A TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY. MINTOFF WAS ACCOMPANIED TO ROME BY HIS PRIVATE SECRETARY, JOE CAMILLERI, AND THE CROWN ADVOCATE GENERAL, DR. EDGAR MIZZI.WIGGINS

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